### NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Office of Archives and History **Department of Cultural Resources** 

### **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Lansing School
Lansing, Ashe County, AH0058, Listed 1/8/2009
Nomination by Sherry Wyatt Photographs by Sherry Wyatt, July 2008



Façade of main school building



Classroom Building (center) and Cafeteria (right)

NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. Aug. 2002) OMB No. 1024-0018

### **United States Department of the Interior National Park Service**

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property		
historic name <u>Lansing School</u> other names/site number <u>N/A</u>	<del></del>	
2. Location		
street & number E. side NC Hwy 194, at jct w/ SR city or town Lansing state North Carolina code NC	vicinity N/A	
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	=======================================	=======================================
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservat determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards fo procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Par Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered si statewide _X locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional content of the content of th	or registering properties in the National Register of the foliation of the property <u>x</u> meets <u>years</u> ignificant <u>nationally</u>	Historic Places and meets the
Signature of certifying official  North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  State or Federal Agency or Tribal government	Date	_
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the N	National Register criteria. ( See continuation sl	neet for additional comments.)
Signature of commenting official/Title	Date	
State or Federal agency and bureau		
4. National Park Service Certification		
I, hereby certify that this property is:		=======================================
entered in the National Register See continuation sheet determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register	Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action	
removed from the National Register other (explain):	Date of Action	<del></del>

ne of Property Ashe County, North Carolina County and State	
5. Classification	
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)
X private	X_ building(s)
public-local	district
public-State	site
public-Federal	structure
	object
<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
Contributing Noncontributing	
<u>2</u> <u>1</u> buildings	
<u>0</u> <u>0</u> sites	
0         0         sites           0         0         structures           0         0         objects           2         1         Total	
<u>0</u> <u>0</u> objects	
<u>2</u> <u>1</u> Total	
Number of contributing resources previously listed in t	the National Register N/A
1. variable of contractions & resources &	
Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if p	property is not part of a multiple property listing.)N/A
6. Function or Use	
Historia Functions (Fatanata and Fatanata an	
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  Cat: _Education Sub: School	
Cat. Ladeation Sub. School	
<b>Current Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	
Cat: vacant Sub:	
- <u></u>	
7 Description	
7. Description	
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions	3)
Colonial Revival	,
Materials (Enter categories from instructions)	
foundation Stone	<del></del>
roof <u>metal</u>	<del></del>
walls <u>stone</u>	

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property	County and State
8. Statement of S	
	onal Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing
<u>X</u> A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<u>X</u> C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.
Criteria Conside	rations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)
B remo C a birt D a cer E a reco F a con	ed by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.  oved from its original location.  thplace or a grave.  metery.  onstructed building, object, or structure.  memorative property.  than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.
Edu Arc	ance (Enter categories from instructions) acation chitecture itics/Government
Period of Signific	cance _1938 - 1958
Significant Dates	<u>1938, 1947, 1952</u>
Significant Perso	<b>on</b> (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A
Cultural Affiliati	ion N/A
Architect/Builde	Baldwin, W.C., foreman
Narrative Staten	nent of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
• •	raphical References
(Cite the books, articl  Previous docume  preliminary d  previously lis  previously de  designated a l  recorded by H	es, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)  entation on file (NPS)  etermination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  ted in the National Register  termined eligible by the National Register  National Historic Landmark  Historic American Buildings Survey #  Historic American Engineering Record #

Lansing School	Ashe County, North Carolina
Name of Property	County and State
Duimany Lagation of Additional Data	
Primary Location of Additional Data _X_ State Historic Preservation Office	
Other State agency	
Federal agency	
Local government	
University	
Other	
Name of repository: N.C. Department of Archives and H	istory
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of Property 3.925 acres	
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation	tion sheet)
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting NorthingZo	
1 17 454730 4039400 2 See continuation sheet.	3 4
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the	
<b>Boundary Justification</b> (Explain why the boundaries were select	ed on a continuation sneet.)
=======================================	
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Sherry Joines Wyatt	
organization Historic Preservation Consultant	date
street & number 21 E. Main St., Ste. 202	telephone540/381-3336
city or town Christiansburg	
	 ==============================
Additional Documentation	
Submit the following items with the completed form:	
<b>Continuation Sheets</b>	
Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating	the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties h	naving large acreage or numerous resources.
<b>Photographs</b> Representative black and white photograph	
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any a	additional items)
Property Owner	
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)	
name Lansing Rocks, Inc.	
street & number P O Box 9263	telephone
city or town Charlotte	state NC zip code 28299

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Ashe County, North Carolina

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#### **Description**

Ashe County is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina. The town of Lansing is in the northeastern part of the county in a narrow valley at the point where Old Field Branch flows into Big Horse Creek. The three buildings of the Lansing School property are situated on a 3.9 acre lot near the eastern edge of the town boundary at the intersection of N.C. Highway 194 and Piney Creek Road (SR 1517). The contributing 1938 Lansing School building faces west towards N.C. Highway 194, the non-contributing cafeteria building lies immediately to its south, and the contributing high school classroom building lies a short distance to the southwest. Northwest of the high school classroom building is a one-story brick gymnasium built in 1959. This building is not included in the nominated property as its half-acre lot was subdivided and sold separately from the remainder of the school property. Athletic fields are located on a separate parcel across NC 194 to the west and are not included in this nomination.

#### Lansing High School, 1938, contributing

Lansing High School is the largest and most architecturally impressive of Ashe County's historic schools. Built of relatively small random-coursed native granite blocks, the broad and well-articulate two-story facade (west) is nineteen bays wide with modest Colonial Revival details. The building is banked with its rear (east) elevation rising only one story. The building has a hip roof of standing seam metal with small gabled attic dormers (vents) at either end. End pavilions on the facade (west) are three bays each and carry parapeted gables ornamented by lunette windows. Four flues, placed like pilasters along the facade, divide it into five sections. The paired windows are nine-over-nine sash. A one-story porch consisting of a pediment with a center circle motif is carried by paired Tuscan columns on granite plinths and marks the slightly recessed central entry. The entry portico is raised off the ground and accessed by a set of graduated stone steps with rounded corners. The double-leaf doors have nine lights over three panels. Each leaf is surmounted by a six-light transom. A bronze Works Progress Administration (WPA) plaque is located to the left of the entry and an inscribed marble block on the right recognizes the building committee, school board, and American Legion post that dedicated the structure. Double-leaf entries, also with six-light transoms, are located on the north and south elevations.

The rear (east) elevation is simply detailed and similar to the facade with four flues and cast stone sills at the nine-over-nine sash windows. The north and south elevations are unadorned with transomed double-leaf entries centered on the first floor and paired nine-over-nine windows on the second floor. Smaller, paired four-over-four windows in the eastern bays give light to the stairwells inside.

Entering the building from the front, a short hall opens with diagonally cut corners into a long double-loaded transverse corridor. The first floor contains six class rooms on the west side of the hall. The original pressed wood/paper wallboard and beadboard wainscoting (corridor only) has been removed, but some replacement drywall is extant on the east side of the hall. Each of the large classrooms is lit by three sets of double windows. Much of the original window and door trim has been removed throughout the building, but what are still in place is simple flat boards without molding or profile. Beadboard backer boards remain, denoting the placement of the large chalkboards (now removed) within each classroom. The doors have single lights over three panels and all have operable transoms. The floor in the corridor and classrooms is oak, although it has been covered by carpet in some locations. Open doorways have been added between several of the classrooms; probably during the late twentieth century. The office is

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located immediately in front of the central entry. Its transomed entry is flanked by two windows that gave natural light to this space since the rear (east) wall of the building is subterranean. South of the office is a large room that may have originally served as the lunchroom. The rooms to the north of the office were inaccessible, but are assumed to be part of the office itself. A drywall and tiled bathroom with mid-to-late twentieth century fixtures and tile is located on the east side near each end of the hall and the stairwells are at the far ends of the building, also on the east side. White china drinking fountains set in niches near the restrooms are likely not original, but appear to be historic. The stairwells have modern drywall sheathing, original wood stairs, simple paneled newels accented by diamond motifs, and rectangular balusters. The stairwells may have originally been enclosed by double-leaf doors, as two transoms surmount each open doorway leading into the stairwells.

Upstairs, the floor plan is essentially the same with a central corridor intersected in the middle by a short corridor. The short corridor is merely an open space lit by a double window facing west, but its eastern end leads to the recessed rear entry of the building. The corridors retain the original beadboard wainscoting with the original wallboard covered by modern drywall above. Both the drywall and original wall board have been partially removed and are in poor condition. The dropped ceiling has been removed, exposing the original wallboard ceiling. The joints of the wallboard are covered with narrow wood strips. Like the first floor there are six original classrooms on the west side of the hall; the northwestern room has been subdivided into two rooms by a modern partition. Four original classrooms are located on the east side of the hall. The two southeastern rooms have been altered with the removal of the original partition and the addition of two modern partitions. These alterations were apparently done to provide for a bathroom on the southern end of the building in addition to the bathroom at the northern end of the hall. Open doorways have been added to connect several of the rooms. All the doors are five panels with transoms. Most classrooms retain the original wallboard ceiling and part of the wall sheathing as well. although the wallboard is in poor condition. The floors throughout are oak, but many have been covered by carpet. At either end of the hall is a modern partition wall with double doors forming a vestibule at the stairwells. Transoms over the entry to either stair suggest that there were original doors leading into the stairwells from the eastern side of the hall.

### Cafeteria Building, 1947-1948, non-contributing

The one-story concrete block cafeteria/lunchroom is a modestly-sized rectangular building with a flat roof. It is located near the south end of the stone school. A wood frame flat-roofed open canopy has been added c.2007 at the south end of the building to shield new self-contained wine coolers. Most of the cafeteria windows are infilled with concrete block, but high clerestory windows still exist. The infilling was probably done in the late-twentieth century. The interior features a mid-twentieth century linoleum tile floor and an open metal trussed ceiling. This building is currently used as a winery. Entry into the building is via double-leaf metal doors in the southern end of the building.

#### High School Classroom Building, 1952-1953, contributing

Immediately west of the cafeteria is a two-story, four-bay, flat-roof, brick building built in 1952-53 to serve as high school classrooms. This building has two-light slider windows and a few one-over-one double-hung sash replacement windows in the two-story brick section and one-over-one sash windows in

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the second- floor frame section. There is little ornamentation apart from a large interior chimney accented by Art Moderne inspired projecting banding near its top. The west elevation of the building has projecting end pavilions. A lower wing runs along the east side of the building encompassing a single transomed entry on the north end of the building. This wing is probably a two-story open-air hallway where the first floor has been enclosed by brick and the second floor has been enclosed with frame construction of plywood or particle board sheathing. It is not known when these changes were made, but based on the materials it is likely the brick was added to the lower section fairly soon after construction and the upper section was enclosed later. The hallways give access to four classrooms on each floor of the building. Bathrooms and stairwells occupy each end of the building and the first floor features an office on the north end. The rooms have drywall sheathing and linoleum tile floors; some have built-in wooden coat closets or storage areas. Rooms on the second floor have clerestory windows on their east walls. The building is currently used as artists' rooms and studios. No new kitchens or bathrooms have been added to the building.

The school is set into a relatively steep hillside and banked such that a ground-level entry to the second floor is located at the rear (east) of the building. Two grassed terraces supported by stone retaining walls and a small gravel lot at the road level make up the terrain in front (west) of the building. At the upper terrace, a stone walkway runs the length of the building and gives access to an entry at either end. A high stone retaining wall supports the hillside at the north end of the building. On the south end of the building, a lower stone wall retains the hillside to the rear of the separate cafeteria building. A stone walk leads behind the cafeteria to a set of covered steps that give access to an upper playground area. A broad central walk runs perpendicular to the entry portico and reaches the lower terrace and gravel lot via two stone staircases accented by low stone pillars. Comments in the 1938-1939 principal's report indicate that the terraces, walks, and stairs were completed the year following the completion of the school building. Modern metal roofs cover the stone and concrete the walkways between the south entry of the stone school, the brick high school classroom building, and the gym. Comments in the 1959-1960 principal's report suggest that the concrete walks were constructed in 1959. The metal coverings were likely added in the late twentieth century and are not considered contributing. A mid-twentieth century concrete stair with metal railings is located in the gravel lot in front of the school. The stairs lead to a subterranean tunnel under the roadway that exits onto the former playing field on the west side of NC 194. The playing field is still owned by the Ashe County Board of Education and is not included in the nomination boundary.

### **Integrity Assessment**

The exterior integrity of the Lansing School property is excellent with virtually no changes to the exterior of the stone school building and modest changes to the high school classroom building. Although the integrity of the cafeteria building is negatively impacted by the enclosure of the original window openings, its existence on the site, along with the main building and the high school building, support our understanding of the school's development over many years. The situation of these buildings on a site featuring original terracing with stone retaining walls, walkways, and staircases is significant.

Joseph A. Martin, Lansing Elementary Principal's Annual Report, 1938-1939, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Frank Jones, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report, 1959-1960, North Carolina State Archives.

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The interior of the stone school building has been negatively impacted by the removal of the original wall board sheathing and some of the beadboard wainscoting by a previous owner. The current owner plans to keep much of the original floor plan intact and restore as much of the historic interior fabric as possible as they rehabilitate the stone building for multiple small business uses including a winery shop.

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#### **Summary**

Lansing School in the town of Lansing, Ashe County, North Carolina is a large stone school built in 1937-1938 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The stone school building, an associated cafeteria (1947), and a high school classroom building (1952) reflect the trend for large school complexes that were built in the county after consolidation began in 1929. The school is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its role in the history of education in Lansing and Ashe County, specifically as a consolidated school. Also under Criterion A, the Lansing School is the only school remaining in the county of five built by the WPA and its predecessor, the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, making it significant under politics/government. The Lansing School is also significant under Criterion C as a well-preserved and finely crafted representative of the native stone buildings commonly built by the WPA in western North Carolina. Further, the modest use of the Colonial Revival style found at the Lansing School is significant in Ashe County where the style was seldom selected. The school is typical of consolidated schools across the state including a variety of features from indoor restrooms and water fountains to the use of landscaping (here terraces with stone walls and steps) to enhance its location on a primary road. The period of significance begins in 1938, the construction date of the school. Because the use of the school by the school system until 1994 does not constitute the degree of significance required for meeting Criteria Consideration G for activities within the last fifty years, the period of significance ends in 1958. Adjacent to the nominated property is a one-story brick gymnasium built in 1959. The gym is not included in the nominated property as its half-acre lot was subdivided and sold separately from the remainder of the school property.

#### **Statement of Significance**

#### Historical Background and Education Context

The town of Lansing was settled during the nineteenth century as a rural agrarian trading center. A post office was established here in 1882. With the arrival of the Virginia-Carolina (later Norfolk & Western) Railroad in 1914, the county's timber industry grew causing an influx of people and businesses around the Lansing Depot, which was used to ship lumber and pulpwood. The Bank of Lansing was established by 1920 and at least one boarding house and numerous single-family residences were constructed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. By 1930, Lansing was the third largest town in the county with a population of 267. The county's largest town, West Jefferson, had 704 people and Jefferson, the county seat, had 296.

The original Lansing School was built c. 1889 in association with the Graybeal Methodist Church, and served a dual purpose as both church and school. This dual role was common across the state, particularly before the 1868 North Carolina Constitution mandated a free education to all children. Yet, even after the 1868 mandate, the state's public school system was among the worst in the nation, suffering from public and legislative indifference, lack of funding and the difficulty of transporting students to

Ward Sexton, "Lansing Paragraphs;" "Lansing Historical Notes," unpublished history in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library; "Report of the Condition of the Bank of Lansing," *The Ashe Recorder*, 11 March 1920, microfilm at the Ashe County Public Library; and *Mountain Times Almanac*, 1994, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

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school. Public schools often could not afford to provide the full four-month term of instruction required by state law. Private schools were popular among those who desired a better education for their children and many private schools were established in Ashe County during the nineteenth century. In 1890, the following private schools were noted in the County Superintendent's annual report: Jefferson Academy, 60 students; Beaver Creek Academy, 70 students; Creston Academy, 50 students; Sutherland Seminary, 60 students; Graybeal Chapel (probably the Lansing school), 55 students; and Helton Academy, 50 students. The original school is referred to in a 1921 deed for the Lansing School property as the "old academy."

Reflecting the rapid growth in Lansing during the 1910s, the school grew to have two teachers in 1919 and it became a three-teacher school in 1920. Although it is unclear when the church-based "academy" was integrated into the public school system, a one-acre property adjacent to the "old academy property" was acquired by the Board of Education from Dr. and Mrs. Lester Jones on June 17, 1921. A new two-story frame eight-room school building is thought to have been erected on this site around this time (one source indicates 1927) for use as a new high school and elementary school. This building eventually was expanded into fourteen rooms. Additional land, eventually totaling about four and a half acres, was acquired in three parts in 1937, 1939, and 1956.

The expansion of the Lansing school was part of the movement to improve public schools in the state and the nation during the late 1910s and 1920s by consolidating smaller schools and encouraging the development of high schools. In 1900, there were ninety-four schools, mostly one-room, in Ashe County with an enrollment of 4,666 students and in 1916, the county had only one public high school, located at Helton. While the county was meeting the state-mandated six-month term by 1920 with a total enrollment of seventy-eight percent of eligible students, attendance was only forty percent. In 1917, however, the construction of two additional high schools, located at West Jefferson and Grassy Creek, and the creation of a high school at Lansing in 1921, illustrate the county's efforts to align its school system with the progressive educational theories promoted by many state school officials. In addition to high school students, all three of the new schools also offered the capacity to teach relatively large numbers of elementary students.<sup>6</sup>

The improvement of the county's roads had the largest effect on the school system since with better roads consolidation became feasible by allowing buses, trucks, wagons and private vehicles carrying school children to have more efficient travel times. Across the state, in fact, the transportation improvements brought about by the "Good Roads" program of the 1920s played a key role in the

"Lansing School," Mountaineer Heritage, Vol. 5 (Jefferson, NC: Northwest Ashe High School, 1984), 29-30; Jim Sumner, "The Development of North Carolina's Public School System Through 1940," unpublished report, State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, 1-3; Arthur L. Fletcher, Ashe County, A History (Jefferson, NC: Ashe County Research Association, 1963), 189; and Ashe County Register of Deeds, book A-2, page 361.

<sup>5</sup> Clarice Weaver, ed., *The Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. II (Charlotte: Delmar Publishing, 1994), 14; "Lansing School;" "Lansing: a Town of Memories," *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 13 (Jefferson, NC: Northwest Ashe High School, 1992), 21-22; and Ashe County Register of Deeds, book A-2, page 361, book X2, page 63, book G-3, page 446, and book V-3, page 371

Ruth Weaver Shepherd, *The Heritage of Ashe County North Carolina, Vol. I*, (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1984), 69; and Sumner, 8-9.

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consolidation of schools. School consolidation meant the closure of several small one or two-teacher schools dispersed over a wide area in favor of transferring the students to a single larger school with several teachers. The first consolidated school in the county was in the Grassy Creek community. The Virginia-Carolina High School (demolished) was created by combining three small schools in the area with expenses shared between the two states. This school was the first high school in the county to be accredited and the first to which students were transported (via one wagon in 1922-23) at public expense. Five wagons and three "motor trucks" were in use by 1925 and in 1927 the school transportation fleet consisted of eleven trucks, traveling an average of sixty-six miles each day, transporting 387 students to five schools.<sup>7</sup>

A second consolidation effort was undertaken by County Superintendent R.E.L. Plummer in the Crumpler area which combined Oakdale, Oak Mill, Fairview, Laurel View, and Old Fields schools into Healing Springs School, built in 1929. Because the county commissioners refused to allocate funds for this project, Plummer himself donated twelve acres for the proposed school and the community provided the building materials. Classes began at the new school with five elementary teachers and 178 students. This was closely followed by the construction of the consolidated Nathans Creek School in 1932. Consolidation of smaller schools into the Lansing school was aided by the institution of a new school bus line in the county in 1934. It seems that the bus was initially utilized by older students traveling to the Lansing School from the Tuckerdale, Graham, Hurricane, and Windfall elementary schools north and northwest of Lansing. It is unclear when these and other small elementary schools in the area were closed and consolidated into Lansing School, but by 1938-1939, Lansing School operated five "trucks" or buses and regularly transported 430 children. To accommodate the bus, the Board of Education, in 1934, asked the "State Highway Commission to improve the road on said bus route so that it will be possible to operate the bus throughout the year."

The movement to consolidate schools was a high priority for the state after the 1919 appointment of Eugene Clyde Brooks as state superintendent of public instruction. The consolidation of schools was put forward as a way to bring social improvements to the rural community. Consolidated schools would be community centers, alleviating rural isolation. The possibility of high school instruction at consolidated schools was seen as necessary in meeting modern (early twentieth century) demands for education in rural communities and preventing the loss of students to larger town schools. Finally, consolidated schools were viewed as a more efficient use of county resources. The consolidation movement paralleled the movement in the state to improve roads and was part of a general progressive movement during the early twentieth century to improve transportation, education, and public health. <sup>10</sup>

Alfred B. Hurt, Educational Development of Ashe County, North Carolina, 1929, electronic version, http://www.newrivernotes.com/nc/asheed5.htm, accessed 2008

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

Fletcher, 191-2; Ashe County Board of Education, "Ordered by County Board of Education," 4 June 1934, North Carolina State Archives; "Lansing School;" and Department of Public Instruction, Ashe County Operating Budget, 1938-1939, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Sumner, 8-9.

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Ashe County had eighty schools in 1933, including forty-seven one-teacher schools and nineteen two-teacher schools. There were a total of four accredited high schools in the county in 1929 including Jefferson, West Jefferson, Lansing (accredited in 1927), and Virginia-Carolina, and six non-accredited high schools, Helton, Fleetwood, Green Valley, Elkland, and Healing Springs. Consolidation continued during the 1930s, and by 1940, the county was home to sixty-three schools, just thirty-five of them one-teacher schools. By 1950, there were only thirteen one-teacher schools. Most of the schools in Ashe County were for white children. In 1940, there were four African American schools, but none offered high school class work.<sup>11</sup>

At Lansing School, funding for a new building was made possible by the WPA. Planning for the new building began in late 1935 when a "Lansing School Committee" was formed by the county Board of Education. Members of the committee were S. N. Baldwin, E. C. Eller, and G. N. Davis. In 1937, the project was underway and the *Skyland Post* published the following: "T. E. Hefner, district WPA project supervisor, was in the city this week and reported that work is now going on tearing down the old building at Lansing school and that it is expected that the new building will be enclosed by cold weather." Foreman for the building's construction was W. C. Baldwin. The school was part of \$37,000 worth of WPA projects that were then being undertaken in the county. During construction in 1937 and 1938, school was held in several different buildings in Lansing. The sixth and seventh grades, for example, were housed in the Methodist Church with a curtain dividing the sanctuary into two rooms. 12

In his annual report to the state Department of Public Instruction for 1937-1938, Principal Joseph Martin noted that "We are constructing a new stone building this year. When completed it will contain 16 classrooms, an office, sanitary toilets, and library, study hall, and adequate heating facilities." The high school population (grades nine through eleven) was then 111 students and the graduating class was fifteen. In the old fourteen-room building, six rooms were dedicated to the high school. <sup>13</sup>

By August 1938, the *Skyland Post* reported that "the construction of the new Lansing High School will be near enough toward completion to warrant opening school there Monday. . ." The following week the paper acclaimed the school's "auspicious opening Monday morning" with an enrollment that was "the largest in the history of the school." The new Lansing High School was one of seventy-three schools to open for the first day of classes on August 29, 1938. Five teachers taught a curriculum consisting of science, math, history, physical education, science, English, French, and home economics. The faculty was led by Joseph A. Martin who served as Lansing principal from 1935 until 1943. Morris Eller served as janitor. <sup>14</sup>

John Hodnette, *Fishing with John Miller*, Vol. 12 (Jefferson, NC: Northwest High School Journalism Staff, 1991) 6-8; Fletcher, 192; Hurt; and Ashe County Historical Society, *Ashe County Revisited* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2004), 51.

<sup>&</sup>quot;To Have Lansing School Inclosed [sic] by Cold Weather," *Skyland Post*, 19 August 1937; Ashe County Board of Education Minutes, 1935; Commemorative Stone at Lansing High School; and Linda White, "Fond Memories of Lansing School," *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 15 (Jefferson, NC: Northwest Ashe High School, 1994).

Joseph A. Martin, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1937-1938, North Carolina State Archives.
 "New School Building," *Skyland Post*, 25 August 1938; "Lansing News," *Skyland Post*, 1 September 1938; "Plans Complete for Opening Ashe Schools Monday Morning," *Skyland Post*, 25 August 1938; Ashe County Schools Operating Budget, 1938-1939; and "Lansing School."

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The 1938-1939 principal's report indicates a high school student body of 121 and a graduating class of thirty-three. Seven rooms of the new sixteen-room building were for high school students and the remaining were for elementary students. All of the county high schools also included elementary grades and the 1938-1939 elementary principal's report, also produced by Martin, shows that six teachers taught grade level classes for grades 1 through 5 while grades 6 and 7 were taught by two teachers who divided the subjects of English, geography, history, and math between them. Other advancements in the new building were a lunch room and a larger library and laboratory. Football, baseball, and basketball were extramural sports while volleyball, softball, handball, and marbles were played at the intramural level. Cheerleaders were elected for football season during the bi-weekly chapel and the Skyland Post's September 29, 1938 issue announced that the "cheering section gave the football team a big 'send-off' on the campus just before they started to Wilkesboro last Friday for the opening game." Other extracurricular activities at the school were a Dramatic club, a Senior Progressive club, and a Home Economics club. The elementary students were offered English club, health club, and rhythm band. <sup>15</sup> The variety of subjects taught at Lansing High and Elementary School, as well as the extracurricular activities available, were benchmarks of the consolidated school movement. Using a larger faculty that served numerous students enabled even rural schools like Lansing to offer a broad palette of educational opportunities.

In 1938, Lansing was the largest of nine high schools in the county with an average daily attendance of 142 high school students. Enrollment in the elementary grades exceeded 275 students. The other high schools were Virginia-Carolina (114 students), West Jefferson (113 students), Jefferson (92 students), Nathans Creek (92 students), Fleetwood (88 students), Riverview (76 students), Elkland (76 students), and Green Valley (30 students).

The onset of World War II appears to have negatively impacted the number of students attending high school at Lansing. Enrollment was down to 125 in 1940-1941. In 1945-1946 there were only 111 high school students with only one graduating. The high school was taught by Principal Ron Davis and three teachers. Davis served as principal from 1943 until 1948. Since 1938-1939 the curriculum had been expanded to include classes in biology, typing, health and physical education, algebra, citizenship, world history, and geography. The home economics teacher directed the lunch room and created menus. The average cost of lunch was ten cents with 250 students served daily. <sup>17</sup>

In 1949-1950 Frank James, who served as principal from 1948 until 1961, reported 158 high school students, which now included class work through the twelfth grade. There were seven teachers and twenty-three students in the graduating class. Classes in agriculture were being offered and were taught in a separate building on campus. The program included hands-on farm work. In keeping with the trend for vocational classes in high schools, business classes and typing class were also available. This curriculum was expanded by 1959-1960 with shorthand and bookkeeping classes. Modern technology was in use by

"Lansing School News," *Skyland Post*, 29 September 1938; Joseph A. Martin, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1938-1939; and Joseph A. Martin, Lansing Elementary Principal's Annual Report 1938-1939.

 <sup>&</sup>quot;Lansing School News," *Skyland Post*, 29 September 1938; and Ashe County Schools Operating Budget, 1938-1939.
 Joseph A. Martin, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1940-1941, North Carolina State Archives; Ron Davis, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1945-1946, North Carolina State Archives; and "Lansing School."

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1950 in the form of filmstrips and motion pictures. Lunch now cost twenty cents.  $^{18}$ 

In this same year, 503 elementary students were taught by fourteen teachers. A part-time music teacher was now a member of the faculty and Principal James commented that "an organized program of art instruction was carried out." To that end, standard classroom materials included paste, crayons, paint, paper, tug board, poster paper. The school also owned phonographic records, rhythm band instruments, and art prints. <sup>19</sup>

At this time, the county had thirty-six elementary schools including sixteen one-teacher schools, nine two-teacher schools, and three three-teacher schools. The smallest of these at Hemlock had only twenty-one students while the three-room Glendale Springs School had 103 students. The large elementary schools in the county in 1949-1950 were Elkland (262 students), Nathans Creek (293), Fleetwood (312), Healing Springs (320), West Jefferson (485), Lansing (503), Riverview (526), and Jefferson (577 students).

Principal James' report for 1955-1956 indicates a period of rapid growth in the school population during the early 1950s as 227 high school students were reported in this year with a graduating class of thirty-five. There were ten high school teachers. This growth was in spite of a decrease in the population of Lansing between 1950 and 1960. The necessary care for a building that was now seventeen years old is also mentioned. James writes that the corridors were painted, the gym (built in 1939) was refurbished, student bookshelves were added, and the home economics department was painted and refurbished with the addition of a living room area. Tables in the science room were now equipped with electricity, gas, and sinks. Competitive sports offered were football, basketball, baseball and intramural teams played softball and ping-pong.<sup>21</sup>

Lansing was still the largest high school in the county in 1951 with 204 students. It was followed by West Jefferson with 152, Virginia-Carolina with 141 students, Jefferson with 134, Fleetwood with 91, Elkland with 88, and Healing Springs with 73 students. Significant consolidation occurred after the construction of two new high schools, Beaver Creek High School in 1954 and Ashe Central High School in 1957. Beaver Creek was the largest high school in 1959-1960 with 396 students followed by Ashe Central with 388, Lansing with 255 students, Virginia-Carolina with 160, and Riverview with 152 students. With the consolidation of Riverview and Lansing High Schools into Northwest Ashe High in 1965-66, the Lansing school became solely an elementary school. By 1969-1970 the consolidation of county high schools had produced three schools: Ashe Central with 514 students, Northwest Ashe with 444 students, and Beaver Creek with 404 students. Ashe County High School was built in 1999 to consolidate Northwest Ashe, Beaver Creek (now demolished), and Ashe Central high schools, and in 2006-2007, Ashe County High School taught 985 students.

Frank James, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1955-1956, North Carolina State Archives and Fletcher, 56.

Frank James, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1949-1950, North Carolina State Archives; Frank James, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1959-1960, North Carolina State Archives; and "Lansing School."

Frank James, Lansing Elementary School Principal's Annual Report 1949-1950, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Frank James, Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1953-1950, North Carolina State Archives; Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1950-1951, North Carolina State Archives; Lansing High School Principal's Annual Report 1959-1960; Department of Public Instruction, Secondary School Annual Report, 1969-1970, North Carolina State Archives; Fletcher, 193-194; Mountaineer Heritage, Volume 20 (West Jefferson, NC, Northwest

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The Lansing School closed in 1994 with the opening of the new Blue Ridge Elementary School near Warrensville. The last principal at Lansing Elementary was Bobby Ashley. The Board of Education sold the school property to Shri Krishan Ghandi on July 31, 1995 and the building went through five owners between 1995 and its purchase by the present owners in 2005. The present owners plan to rehabilitate the building for multiple business and rental uses including a tasting room/shop for their winery.

#### The New Deal

Like most of northwestern North Carolina, self-sufficiency and small-scale agriculture long defined Ashe County life. However, the booming years from the coming of the railroad in 1914 through the late 1920s had expanded the county's economic system, making the onset of the Depression a reeling blow. The boom had rested on timber products and with rapid clearing, along with the deforestation brought about by the chestnut blight; this source of livelihood was declining sharply by 1930. The traditional agricultural economy also suffered during these years as the livestock markets plummeted, removing the primary cash product. Additionally, coal mines in Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky, previously sources of "emergency" income to county residents, greatly reduced operations as coal prices declined.<sup>24</sup>

Responding to the economic crisis, President Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted a variety of new relief programs that were called collectively "the New Deal." For Ashe County, two programs are notable due to the tangible mark of the work conducted by the participants: the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA). The CCC was established as an "army" of young men who would "battle" against the destruction and erosion of the country's land and worked on the Blue Ridge Parkway, a scenic highway that passes through Ashe County. Established by the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933, the ERA, began its state-administered programs with two principal objectives: to give direct relief to those in need (including the unemployed and transients), as well as to administer a public works program that would employ jobless citizens and build useful public structures. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act was passed in 1935 replacing the 1933 act and establishing two new agencies to take over the primary programs. Thus, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was founded and absorbed the old ERA Works Program.

By 1935, the NC-ERA had spent over fifty-two million dollars in federal funds, with nearly \$250,000 in Ashe County. Following the ERA, the WPA spent an additional \$173.7 million in North Carolina from 1935 through 1942. Unlike the ERA, which had been state-operated, the WPA was a purely federal undertaking. Nationwide, three billion dollars were allocated for public construction by the WPA's

Ashe Journalism Class), 44; and N. C. School Report Cards, www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?pYear=2006-2007&pLEACode=050&pSchCode=302, July 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> William Baldwin, "Last in a Line," *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 15, 1994, 8-9 and Ashe County Register of Deeds, book 207, page 455; book 231, page 2362; book 231, page 2365; book 260, page 2395; book 335, page 1378; book 336, page 1103; and book 346, page 768.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Fletcher, 322-323.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Kirk, J. S., ed. *Emergency Relief in North Carolina*, 1932 - 1935 (Raleigh: Emergency Relief Administration, 1936), 14 and 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Kirk, 21.

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Public Works Administration, which focused on capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive undertakings. Illustrating the interest in school construction projects nationally, one-sixth of the three billion dollars spent by the Public Works Administration was used for school facilities. The predominance of school projects was true in Ashe County as well, where only road projects outnumbered school projects during the NC-ERA's tenure. Sixty-one school buildings were built by the NC-ERA in North Carolina between 1934 and 1935 and all together the NC-ERA and the WPA aided in the construction of 500 schools in sixty-two counties across North Carolina. The WPA alone spent three million dollars on improvements to North Carolina schools from 1935 through 1939.

The frequency of school projects was directly related to the lack of available local funding for school improvements. In 1930-1931, 4.1 million dollars was spent statewide on school buildings, but by 1931-1932 this figure had plummeted to two million dollars and was only \$800,000 in 1932-1933.<sup>28</sup> Other important factors that made schools and gymnasiums ideal candidates for NC-ERA and WPA funds were an increasing recognition of the importance of modern school facilities and the potential for wider community use of the buildings for programs and other activities. In order to receive funding, a project was required to have a local sponsor. All school-related NC-ERA and WPA projects were sponsored by the local school boards. Additionally, part of the project cost had to be supplied locally. This local contribution was typically the donation or purchase of materials. In January 1935, for example, the school board in Ashe County sold an unused property, the dormitory building at West Jefferson School, to raise money for their share of the "PWA program." In December of that same year, the school board arranged to borrow \$1,750 from the Board of Commissioners to supplement WPA funding for repairs on fifty-one small school buildings.<sup>30</sup> In an April 14, 1939 letter to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ashe County Superintendent, J. B. Hash commented on the lack of funding: "This has been a golden opportunity to make improvements but we have not been able to do anything like the amount that should have been done, due to the fact, that we have not been able to provide the sponsor's part of the funds. We are doing the best we can however without money."31

The scope of the NC-ERA and the WPA funded school building program in Ashe County was broad, including the construction of the central buildings at Jefferson, West Jefferson, Riverview, Lansing, and Virginia-Carolina high schools and additions to Nathans Creek, Fleetwood, and Healing Springs high schools. Of these, only the Lansing, Nathans Creek, and Healing Springs buildings are extant. Nine new gymnasiums were built, providing a gym at each high school; only the gyms at Elkland

Kirk, 41, 185 and 452-453; Badger, Anthony, *North Carolina and the New Deal* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981), 41; C. W. Hackensmith, *History of Physical Education* (NY: Harper & Row, 1966), 435; and Sumner, 22.

Bell, John Jr., *Hard Times* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1982), 63.

<sup>29</sup> PWA refers to the Public Works Administration, the arm of the Works Progress Administration that coordinated construction projects.

Ashe County Board of Education, Special Meeting of Board of Education Minutes, 14 December 1935; Kirk, 84 and 103; and *Skyland Post*, 10 January 1935.

J. B. Hash, letter to Dr. Clyde A. Erwin, General Correspondence of the Superintendent, 1934-1944, North Carolina State Archives.

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and Nathans Creek are extant. Relatively inexpensive to build, gymnasiums were extremely useful because they served not only for school athletic events, but as auditoriums and community buildings as well. Gymnasiums were the most common type of new building constructed on school campuses by the NC-ERA.<sup>32</sup>

#### Architecture

There were ninety-four schools in Ashe County in 1900, most of them one-teacher schools. These schools were typically small one-room frame buildings with front-gable roofs. Two-teacher schools became more common during the early twentieth century. The hip-roof T-plan building with either two rooms and a vestibule or three rooms may have been a common form for two-teacher school; there are three surviving examples in the county. Like the one-room schools, these buildings were of frame construction. The interior space of these buildings often had movable panels that allowed the two classrooms to join into a single space to enjoy programs on a raised stage. Beadboard interior sheathing and weatherboard exterior sheathing were typical.

Road improvements during the 1920s and 1930s contributed to school consolidation that entailed the construction of larger schools and the removal from the system almost eighty-five percent of the one-teacher schools. The first consolidated school was Healing Springs School, which was built in 1929. The building's long brick form is a departure from the small frame schools built during the earlier period. The entry portico and belfry give the building modest Colonial Revival styling. Inside, the entry opens into a large auditorium with multiple classrooms in each wing accessed by lateral hallways. A similar brick school was also built at Nathans Creek in 1932. The use of masonry was a common theme among Ashe County's consolidated schools as were the lateral, double-loaded hallways. These school buildings were generally only one-story with the Lansing School being an exception.

The Lansing High School stands out among the three surviving early twentieth-century consolidated schools in Ashe County as the largest and most architecturally significant. The use of native stone, which illustrates the WPA's policy to build in regionally appropriate materials, and the excellent craftsmanship of the masonry work contribute to the architectural value of the school. Even at the time of its construction, the importance of the school's architecture was recognized. The *Skyland Post* reported in 1938 that the building "is rumored to be one of the most beautiful schools in this and the adjoining counties." In 1939, Ashe County Superintendent, J. B. Hash wrote in a letter to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction: "I hope it will be convenient for you to visit the county sometime during the summer. We have recently completed a WPA School Building out of native stone that we are rather proud of..."

The natural, rustic style used by New Deal organizations like the CCC and WPA across Western North Carolina was developed from design standards created by the National Park Service. The use of materials such as stone, unhewn logs, and heavy timbers as well as buildings with a low, horizontal presentation were thought to connect best with the natural environment. The WPA built schools, post offices, community buildings, hospitals, and libraries using these design tenets augmented by modest

Fletcher, 193 and Kirk, 452-453.

<sup>&</sup>quot;New School Building," Skyland Post, 25 August 1938.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> J. B. Hash.

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details in the Craftsman or Colonial Revival styles to emphasize the public or institutional function of the buildings.<sup>35</sup>

Relatively little is known about the design and construction of Lansing School. The commemorative stone on the building states that W. C. Baldwin was the foreman for the job. Baldwin is a common family name in Ashe County and it is presumed that W. C. Baldwin was a local contractor. Additionally, one source reports that the design for the school was done by Basil Barr, who was a well-known Ashe County cabinet-maker. The same source acknowledges two stone masons, Calvin Kinsey and his brother, who had worked on bridges on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Kinseys were from Arkansas. They reportedly helped to haul rocks from Devil Stairs and the then newly built Stags Creek Bridge (both sites are in Ashe County) for the school building. <sup>36</sup>

Regardless of its origin, the design of the Lansing School is that of a typical early twentieth-century consolidated school. The designs for these schools were influenced by the Division of Schoolhouse Planning, created in 1920, which made many suggestions on school construction ranging from a preference for a two-story building to detail like water fountains and proper lighting. Although local officials were usually responsible for obtaining plans for a building, these plans were reviewed by the Division. Standards applied to new school designs included the National Educational Association's recommendation of a minimum of fifty percent of the total floor area devoted to student instruction spaces (not including hallways, stairs, administrative areas, and closets). State officials also favored building schools from long-wearing materials, such as brick and stone, and providing attractive landscaping at the front of the property, which was ideally situated on a primary roadway. The Lansing School met these recommendations as well as the state's desire for schools to have indoor plumbing and water fountains. The state-recommended auditorium was a shared space in the no longer extant gymnasium.<sup>37</sup>

The Colonial Revival style grew in popularity after the Columbian Exposition of 1893 and drew from earlier Georgian, Federal, and classical architecture; the use of stylistic features such as classical columns, fanlights, and classical cornices were common. The popularity of the style was increased by the growing sense of loss of American identity after the turn of the twentieth century. It was commonly used for early twentieth-century residential and institutional architecture across North Carolina, but was seldom used in Ashe County.

Lansing High School uses a restrained palette of Colonial Revival stylistic features such as the simple classically-styled entry portico and lunette windows in the gabled-end bay. It is the only surviving WPA-built school and one of only two early twentieth-century schools with Colonial Revival styling in the county; the Healing Springs School has a modest entry portico with a domed belfry. Thus, the use of the Colonial Revival style is notable as it was rare in the county during the period of significance. Of the four other high schools (all demolished) built by the NC-ERA or WPA in Ashe County, only Virginia-Carolina and West Jefferson exhibited Colonial Revival styling. The one-story building at Virginia-Carolina High School (1939) was constructed of brick, but it did have modest Colonial Revival elements similar to those at Lansing, such as the parapeted gables in the end bays and pedimented central entry

<sup>37</sup> Sumner, 12-15.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Clay Griffith, "Elk Park School National Register Nomination," North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 2005.

Lisa Wiles, Mountaineer Heritage, Vol. 12 (Jefferson, NC: Northwest Ashe High School, 1991) 15-16.

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porch. West Jefferson High School (c.1935) was a two-story brick building with sixteen classrooms. This building carried distinct Colonial Revival detailing in a seven-bay classical entrance portico. Riverview High School and Jefferson High School (built between 1933 and 1935) were both one-story stone buildings with little stylistic detail. It should be noted that the architecture of Lansing School is similar in character to the only other extant stone institutional buildings built by the WPA in Ashe County, the West Jefferson Community Building (1938) and the Ashe County Memorial Hospital (1940).

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#### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the Lansing School nomination is shown as a solid line on the accompanying map labeled "Tax Map and Site Plan" and includes the entire parcel identified as 16215-196.

### **Boundary Justification**

The boundary encompasses the majority of the property historically associated with the school and provides an appropriate setting for Lansing School. The separate acreage on which the gymnasium stands has been excluded since the construction of the gym post-dates the period of significance and the athletic fields have been excluded due to separate ownership and their location across NC 194 from the school buildings.

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All photographs are of:

Lansing School, Lansing, Ashe County, N.C.

Date: 12/2007 Photographer: Sherry Joines Wyatt

Location of negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh

- 1. Primary Elevation, 1938 School Building.
- 2. Relationship of 1938 School Building, 1947 Cafeteria, 1952 Classroom Building, and 1959 gym.
- 3. North Elevation (front) of Classroom Building.
- 4. South Elevation (side) of School Building with Cafeteria and open shed; East Elevation of Classroom Building to left of photograph.
- 5. West Elevation of Cafeteria Building showing entry and open shed.
- 6. East Elevation (rear) of School Building.
- 7. Interior, representative classroom, second floor, 1938 School Building.
- 8. Newel post, stairway, 1938 School Building.